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Haleigh Ewing
Bridgewater State University

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A Retrospective Study:
Investigating the Role of Childhood Experience and Parenting Style in the
Development of Narcissism

Haleigh C. Ewing

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Bridgewater State University

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Dr. Ashley Hansen-Brown, Thesis Advisor

Dr. Sandra Nearing, Committee Member

Abstract

Levels of narcissism among college students have increased steadily across generations over the past few decades (Twenge & Foster, 2010). The subtypes of narcissism, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, both take root in self-centeredness and entitlement. However, an overconfidence and inflated sense of self characterize grandiose narcissists, who often use their charm as a source of agency and control over others, while vulnerable narcissists are insecure, defensive and suspicious yet dependent on others due to their perceived lack of control (Hansen-Brown & Crocker, 2017). Research is needed to explore the inciting influential factors in narcissism development, as well as what influences the deviation between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. The current study investigated the potential role of parenting style (i.e., authoritarian, authoritative, permissive), positive and negative childhood experiences, and childhood trauma in the development of each type of narcissism (grandiose or vulnerable), using the parenting styles defined by Baumrind (1967). We found that grandiose narcissists tended to recall permissive parenting while vulnerable narcissists recalled authoritarian parenting. Vulnerable narcissists reported higher levels of trauma and negative childhood experiences in comparison to grandiose narcissists, although grandiose narcissism was related to positive childhood experiences as well as negative childhood experiences and trauma. There was no evidence of significant differences in grandiose and vulnerable narcissism in relation to maternal and paternal parenting styles. These variables are not the sole cause of narcissism development; however, researchers and mental health professionals can utilize the knowledge gained from this study to build on previous research and improve early intervention and therapeutic treatment methods for grandiose and vulnerable trait narcissism.

A Retrospective Study: Investigating the Role of Childhood Experience and Parenting Style in the Development of Narcissism

The term narcissism stems from the ancient story of Narcissus, a hunter in Greek mythology who fell in love with his own reflection (Hamilton, 1942). Currently, the modern American vernacular employs the term narcissism to describe a highly self-interested, selfish and entitled person. Beyond its use in everyday language, narcissism has been discussed in psychological literature since the 19th century (Daly, 2016). Empirical psychological research has uncovered subtypes of narcissism, which make its definition more complex than the oversimplified conversational use. Psychology categorizes narcissism by intensity, as a personality trait or clinical disorder, and by behavior type, as grandiose or vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2017). Most research focuses on establishing these categories, yet little is known about how each subtype of narcissism develops. Some researchers have implicated parenting as a potential influence (Kohut, 1977; Brummelman et al., 2015), while other environmental factors during childhood may contribute to narcissism development as well. Much research remains to be done to better understand the relationship between parenting styles, childhood experiences, and narcissism development.

Trait vs. Pathological Narcissism

Narcissism research focuses on different populations depending on the intensity of narcissism being studied. Expressions of narcissistic qualities range from trait narcissism to pathological levels of narcissism observed in clinical populations (Blais & Little, 2010). Trait narcissism is studied in the general population, while pathological narcissism research studies individuals with Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). For an individual to be diagnosed with NPD, they must present at least five of the nine criteria listed in the DSM-5. These diagnostic

criteria include a host of narcissistic qualities resulting in significant impairments in personality functioning and interpersonal functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Contrastingly, as noted in Miller and Campbell's study (2010), trait narcissism is not a diagnosis, rather a continuous variable in nonclinical populations. This means that trait narcissism scales measure an individual's level of narcissism on a spectrum from low to high narcissism. Everyone falls somewhere on this narcissism spectrum, so trait narcissism research seeks to understand the influences in developing high levels of narcissism.

Importantly, trait narcissism research can be used to supplement the understanding and treatment of NPD (Widiger, 2010). For example, an experimental study of trait narcissism by Konrath and colleagues (2006) demonstrated that finding shared characteristics or similarities with someone helps highly narcissistic individuals reduce aggression towards criticism from that person. Heightened aggression in interpersonal relationships is a common behavior for both trait and pathological narcissists, so the method of finding shared characteristics can likely be used by those with NPD to reduce aggression in relationships. As this discovery has informed clinicians' understanding and treatment of NPD, the discovery of a link between specific childhood experiences and trait narcissism may also contribute to future NPD research, including potential preventative measures and treatment. Understanding trait narcissism would benefit individuals struggling with narcissistic tendencies in everyday life, yet do not have a personality disorder, as well as individuals with an NPD diagnosis.

Grandiose vs. Vulnerable Narcissism

Within trait narcissism, many researchers have noted two distinct phenotypes of narcissistic qualities, which are modernly referred to as grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism (Miller et al., 2011; Wink, 1991). In a synthesis of previous literature, Pincus and

Lukowitsky (2010) describe grandiose narcissists as confident, envious, aggressive and manipulative in order to enhance their already inflated self-image. Grandiose narcissists view themselves in the limelight, attributing this attention to their numerous impressive qualities. On the other hand, vulnerable narcissists are defensive and vindictive as they perceive themselves as targets in a world out to get them. They are shameful of their hypersensitivity, poor self-image, self-criticality and depressed affect. Vulnerable narcissists base their self-worth on the approval of others (Nehrig et al., 2019). Furthermore, vulnerable narcissists' low self-esteem influences envious behavior (Wink, 1991).

Researchers have offered theories that may explain why grandiose and vulnerable narcissism have divergent characteristics. The Perceived Control Theory of Narcissism suggests grandiose narcissists may view their egotistical qualities as a powerful source of agency and control over others, whereas vulnerable narcissists may be suspicious yet dependent on others as a result of their perceived lack of control (Hansen-Brown, 2018). Additionally, Allroggen and colleagues (2018) analyzed the relationship between the Five Factor Model of Personality and grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. They found that grandiose narcissism and vulnerable narcissism correlate with specific combinations of trait dimensions. Grandiose narcissists' behaviors relate to low agreeableness and high extraversion. Low agreeableness is associated with a lack of cooperative and social skills, as well as a lack of empathy and trust, and high extraversion relates to the grandiose narcissist's outgoing nature. Vulnerable narcissists' behaviors correlate with neuroticism, including self-doubt, emotional instability, anxiety, and depression.

Narcissism Development

Most trait narcissism research contributes to defining the subtypes of narcissism and their respective behavior patterns. However, less definitive research exists on the developmental origins of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Although previous research has found connections between narcissism and other elements of personality, there is not a definitive cause of narcissism. Specifically, it is uncertain what causes individuals to develop either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism.

One potential explanation for narcissism development may be related to children mimicking their narcissistic parents' behavior and personality. This would mean that narcissistic parents would raise narcissistic children. However, Brummelman and colleagues (2015) discounted this explanation and found that parents' narcissistic levels were only weakly correlated to their child's level of narcissism; this suggests that narcissism develops from something other than parental narcissism.

Another idea may be that early attachment is significant in narcissism development. In their 2019 study, Nehrig and colleagues analyzed the relationship between narcissism and Bowlby's (1969) attachment theory. Their findings showed that children may have difficulty forming a secure sense of self, if their primary caregiver was not a "secure base." Poor quality of early relationships may prompt a child to develop an anxious attachment, signified by a persistent demand for validation as seen in vulnerable narcissism, or an avoidant attachment, marked by an avoidance of dependency and lack of trust characteristic of a grandiose narcissist. Their results also demonstrated how a lack of positive models of interpersonal functioning during childhood may lead to difficulty in meeting their narcissistic needs interpersonally and in turn finding less satisfaction in relationships.

Of particular interest, some researchers implicate parenting styles as a potential influence in developing either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism. In 1967, Baumrind, a clinical and developmental psychologist, recognized not only differences in how parents approached raising their children, but also unique patterns of personality traits developed by children who experienced similar parenting styles. During Baumrind's observational study of preschool children and their parents (1967), three parenting styles emerged: authoritative, authoritarian and permissive. The authoritative parent demonstrated rational control over the child by standard setting and reinforcement, yet acknowledged and valued the child's opinions, emotions and interests through open communication. Conversely, authoritarian parents ruled by absolute standard, while restricting the child's autonomy and demanding obedience. Permissive parents allowed the child to act on their impulses and desires, as the parent avoided exercising authoritative dominance in order to maintain a companion-like relationship with the child.

Each parenting style respectively influenced the child's development of certain personality traits. Baumrind's study (1967) measured self-control, approach-avoidance tendency, self-reliance, subjective mood, and peer affiliation. Children of authoritative parents tended to be well-adjusted, self-assertive, socialized, independent, and explorative. Authoritarian parenting produced children who were insecure, apprehensive, avoidant yet approval seeking, dysphoric, and more likely to become passively hostile under stress. Lastly, children of permissive parents often remained immature due to a lack of modeling and low maturity demands. This study found more similarities between children of authoritarian and permissive parents, with children of authoritative parents being the most dissimilar of the three personality patterns.

On the basis of Baumrind's theory of parenting styles and personality development, trait narcissism development may be linked with parenting style. Perhaps an authoritarian parenting

method influences the child's development of vulnerable narcissism and a permissive parenting method influences grandiose narcissism development. In fact, some past theory and research aligns with this idea.

Kohut (1977) theorized that trait narcissism is a form of overcompensation for inadequate parental recognition, which may align with Baumrind's authoritarian parenting style. Kohut examined narcissism using his theoretical model of the self. This theory noted that a healthy, well-developed self stems from a balance of mirroring and idealization in childhood. Mirroring satisfies the need for self-confirmation and validation, while idealization occurs when children view their caregivers as a source of calm and comfort. Kohut (1977) predicted that a disturbance in either of these processes would create an imbalance, producing narcissism. A lack of mirroring and/or idealization might inspire vulnerable narcissism, while an excess of mirroring and/or idealization may lead to grandiose narcissism.

A study by Watson and colleagues (1992) brought these two theories together by analyzing Baumrind's (1967) parenting styles within the context of Kohut's (1977) narcissism theory. College age participants responded to measures including the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (Raskin & Hall, 1979) and the paternal and maternal versions of the Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991). The results supported Kohut's theory, citing permissive parents' failure to utilize optimal frustration as learning opportunities for independence may have influenced the development of prolonged immature grandiosity. Maternal parenting styles predicted self-functioning more than paternal parenting, indicating that perhaps maternal parenting style is a stronger predictor of narcissism. Watson and colleagues (1992) also claimed that future researchers would be mistaken to investigate parenting styles in isolation. They proposed future research should collect data on the parent's gender, personality traits, and

parenting style as well as other positive and negative childhood experiences beyond the family to supplement the understanding of influences on narcissism development.

A more recent longitudinal study by Brummelman and colleagues (2015) also found support for the hypotheses of Kohut (1977) and Watson and colleagues (1992). Researchers gathered data on 565 children in a series of four 6-month waves. These children ranged in age from 7 to 12 years old, during which narcissism usually emerges in personality development. Brummelman and colleagues tested the role of social learning theory and psychoanalytic theory in grandiose narcissism development. In alignment with social learning theory, parental overvaluation predicted grandiose narcissism in each wave. This supports the notion that internalization of parental overvaluation may contribute to grandiose narcissism development. In congruence with these findings by Brummelman and colleagues (2015), perhaps permissive parents' tendency to indulge their children with overvaluation may be influencing their child's grandiose narcissism development. Brummelman and colleagues (2015) did not find evidence of a lack of parental warmth predicting grandiose narcissism, which negates psychoanalytic theory. Instead, parents' lack of warmth consistently predicted low self-esteem in their children. Limitingly, the Child Narcissism Scale (Thomaes et al., 2008) used in this study only measured grandiose narcissism. However, vulnerable narcissists have low self-esteem (Wink, 1991), so perhaps a lack of warmth, which is characteristic of authoritarian parenting, may be a factor in vulnerable narcissism development.

In complement, childhood experiences beyond experienced parenting style likely help shape a child's personality development. Any childhood experience within the home or in the academic or social spheres may have an impact on the child's personality development as a whole, including the development of narcissistic traits. Whether these experiences are positive or

negative may affect this development differently. For example, Miller and colleagues (2011) emphasized that vulnerable narcissism shares a strong correlation with experiencing child abuse and problematic parenting. Similarly, a study by Nehrig and colleagues (2019) reported that experiences of childhood maltreatment are consistent with developing maladaptive methods of fulfilling interpersonal needs and a lack of self-esteem regulation. Vulnerable narcissists in particular were found to measure their self-worth based on the approval of others (Nehrig et al., 2019). Therefore, a severe lack of warmth demonstrated by physical and emotional abuse and neglect may influence narcissistic vulnerability. In addition, though some research already links vulnerable narcissism with negative childhood experiences, there is a need for research testing the link between positive childhood experiences and grandiose narcissism.

Understanding the influential factors in narcissism development is increasingly important as levels of self-centeredness and entitlement have become an interpersonal and societal issue (Twenge et al., 2008). Specifically, narcissism levels among college students have increased steadily across generations over the past few decades (Twenge & Foster, 2010; for alternative view see Trzesniewski et al., 2008). Research has demonstrated the negative interpersonal effects of narcissism, in which maladaptive narcissistic behaviors include aggression (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), bullying (e.g., Ang et al., 2010), poor social relationships (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002) and a lack of collaborative skills (e.g., Penney & Spector, 2002). Furthermore, Nehrig and colleagues (2019) assert that a pattern of interpersonal shortcomings may lead to depression and anxiety for vulnerable narcissists and isolation for grandiose narcissists. Research into the potential origins of trait narcissism may inform preventative measures and mental health counseling for interpersonal and intrapersonal challenges in both clinical and non-clinical cases of narcissism.

Current Study

The following research will investigate the potential link between parenting style (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) and other childhood experiences (i.e., positive/negative childhood experiences, family dynamic, and childhood trauma) with each narcissism type (grandiose and vulnerable). In conceptualizing this research, three hypotheses were developed. First, we hypothesized that grandiose narcissists would recall experiences of permissive parenting styles (H1a), while vulnerable narcissists would recall experiences of authoritarian parenting styles (H1b). Additionally, we hypothesized that vulnerable narcissists would score higher in trauma and negative childhood experiences in comparison to grandiose narcissists (H2a) whereas grandiose narcissists would score higher in positive childhood experiences (H2b). Lastly, due to a lack of research in this area, we aimed to explore whether any differences existed for either grandiose or vulnerable narcissism with regard to participant-reported paternal and maternal parenting styles (H3). This study was pre-registered on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/3h4sa>).

Method

Participants

The current study included data from 200 participants (56% male, 43% female), recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants ranged in age from 21 to 73 years ($M = 36.30$, $SD = 10.81$). Most participants identified as Caucasian (75%), while others identified as African American (12%), Hispanic (3%) and Asian (3%). Running an a priori power analysis (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009) determined that at least 111 participants would give us 95% power to detect a medium-sized effect in our correlational analyses. We decided to round up to 200 participants in case some participants had to be excluded or did not fully complete the

survey. Participants were selected based on their enrollment as an MTurk user and HIT approval rating of 95% or higher, which indicates the high quality of their participation in other MTurk tasks. Participants were required to be eighteen years of age or older and citizens of the United States. Each participant earned \$1.25 for completing this survey. Originally 247 data entries were collected; however, 47 entries were excluded from analysis due to incomplete responding and ineligibility for compensation.

Procedure

To begin the survey, participants first saw a screen containing an implied consent form. If the participant selected that they did not agree to do the survey, they were asked to exit. If the participant agreed to do the survey, they were provided a box to input their Mturk worker ID, which was used to award compensation, but which was de-identified from the data before analysis. Next, the general instructions page explained that they would answer a set of questions about their personality, thoughts and feelings, their family and their childhood. The survey was completed using Qualtrics. Participants then answered questions measuring their narcissism levels for both grandiose (NPI; Raskin & Hall 1979) and vulnerable narcissism (HSNS; Hendin & Cheek, 1997), perceived parenting styles from their maternal and paternal figures (PAQ-Maternal and Paternal; Buri 1991), family dynamic and socialization, positive and negative childhood experiences (self-created measure based on Katz & Berlin, 2014) and their exposure to childhood trauma (ACEs; Anda & Felitti, 2003). All 7 measures were presented in the same fixed order for each participant. At the end of the survey, participants also completed a question about how seriously they took the survey, from 1 (not at all seriously) to 5 (very seriously). After the survey, they answered basic demographic information that included a question about their

perception of the purpose of this study. Finally, the participants read a debrief that disclosed the purpose of the study.

Measures

Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI)

The NPI was used to measure grandiose narcissism (Raskin & Hall, 1979). For each of the 40 forced-choice items, the participants read a set of two statements and chose which statement most accurately described their feelings and beliefs about themselves. These items included statements like “People sometimes believe what I tell them,” or “I can make anybody believe anything I want them to.” The NPI is scored by summing all narcissistic choices selected out of the total number of items, with a high score indicating higher grandiose narcissism. ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HSNS)

The HSNS was designed to measure vulnerable narcissism (Hendin & Cheek, 1997). The HSNS contained 10 items with responses on a 5-point Likert scale ($1 = Strongly Disagree$, $5 = Strongly Agree$). An example item would be “I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people’s troubles.” The HSNS was scored by summing all narcissistic choices out of the total number of items, with a high score indicating higher vulnerable narcissism. ($\alpha = 0.85$).

Family Experiences

The survey contained 9 self-created items to obtain demographic information about the participant’s family. These items inquired about the following information: number of siblings, what parental figures lived in the home, relationship to extended family, and types of visitors to

the home. Participants had the option to write a short-typed description of their family or supply any additional information they would like to share about their family demographics.

Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ) - Maternal and Paternal

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (Buri, 1991) measured parenting styles using Baumrind's (1967) typology. The PAQ consisted of two subsections to measure parenting styles implemented by maternal and paternal figures independently. The PAQ-M captured the participant's perception of their mother or maternal figure's parenting style during the majority of their childhood, while the PAQ-P captured the participant's perception of their father or father figure's parenting style. Each subsection included 30 items addressing the values and behaviors of each of the participant's parental figures. Participants were asked to respond to each item using a 5-point Likert scale (*1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree*). The PAQ-M contained three subscales made up of 10 items each: authoritative mothering (e.g., "My mother gave me clear direction for my behaviors and activities, but she was also understanding when I disagreed with her," $\alpha = 0.93$), authoritarian mothering (e.g., "My mother did not allow me to question any decision she had made," $\alpha = 0.91$), and permissive mothering (e.g., "My mother seldom gave me expectations and guidelines for my behavior," $\alpha = 0.92$). The PAQ-P contained three subscales made up of 10 items each: authoritative fathering (e.g., "My father always encouraged verbal give-and-take whenever I have felt that family rules and restrictions are unreasonable," $\alpha = 0.93$), authoritarian fathering (e.g., "My father felt that wise parents should teach their children early just who is boss in the family," $\alpha = 0.94$), and permissive fathering (e.g., "My father did not view himself as responsible for directing and guiding my behavior," $\alpha = 0.92$).

Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (ACEs)

The ACEs scale measured how traumatic the participant's childhood was (Felitti et al., 1998). The scale consisted of 10 self-report items. Participants were asked to tally how many of these traumatic events they experienced before their 18th birthday. These items targeted experiences of emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical maltreatment and/or neglect, parental separation/divorce, family substance use, mental illness with the household, and/or parental incarceration. An example item targeting neglect would be, "Did you often feel that (1) you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you or (2) your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?" Participants responded to each of the 10 items with a "Yes" or "No". Each "Yes" response signified an individual item score of 1. The total sum of "Yes" responses reflected the participant's childhood trauma score in a range from 0 to 10 ($\alpha = 0.89$).

Self-Created Measure of Positive and Negative Childhood Experiences (PNEs)

Positive and negative childhood experiences were measured through a survey created for this study. Some of the negative items pertaining to childhood psychological stress were taken from a measure used by Katz and Berlin in their 2014 study researching psychological stress in childhood and myopia development. The measure for this study consisted of 25 statements. Participants were asked to indicate how often they encountered the experiences described in these statements during their childhood on a 5-point Likert scale ($1 = \text{Never}$, $5 = \text{Always}$). Eight items were summed to create a total score for positive childhood experiences (e.g., "How often did you experience opportunities to showcase your views, talents or interests?", $\alpha = .90$); and 17

items were summed to create a total score of negative childhood experiences (e.g., “How often did you experience being teased or bullied by peers?”, $\alpha = .95$).

Results

Analysis of the data consisted of Pearson’s bivariate correlation tests for each hypothesis. SPSS was used for data analysis. Prior to analysis, sum scores were created for each tested variable. Participants with missing data were excluded from the specific variable’s correlation analysis. There were no participants excluded for lack of seriousness while taking the survey, as no participants selected 1 (not seriously at all) on the seriousness scale. Table 1 displays the correlations between the key variables.

Table 1

Correlations between all variables and narcissism scales.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. HSNS	1										
2. NPI	.30**	1									
3. PAQ-M (authoritative)	.16*	.22**	1								
4. PAQ-M (authoritarian)	.36**	.23**	-.19*	1							
5. PAQ-M (permissive)	.40**	.44**	.57**	-.13	1						
6. PAQ-P (authoritative)	.19*	.35**	.64**	.06	.45**	1					
7. PAQ-P (authoritarian)	.43**	.19*	-.04	.59**	.07	-.14	1				
8. PAQ-P (permissive)	.35**	.44**	.42**	.05	.76**	.57**	-.17*	1			
9. ACEs	.47**	.18*	-.13	.43**	.16*	.03	.37**	.24**	1		
10. PNEs (positive)	-.02	.17*	.68**	-.08	.29**	.64**	-.09	.29**	-.20**	1	

11. PNEs (negative)	.56**	.29**	-.15*	.43**	.26**	.05	.42**	.36**	.72**	-.14*	1
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Primary Analyses

First, we tested whether grandiose narcissists recall experiences of permissive parenting styles (H1a) and vulnerable narcissists recall experiences of authoritarian parenting styles (H1b). Partially supporting H1a, grandiose narcissism was positively correlated with both maternal permissive parenting style ($r = .44, p < .001$) and paternal permissive parenting style ($r = .44, p < .001$). Partially supporting H1b, vulnerable narcissism was positively correlated with both maternal authoritarian parenting style ($r = .36, p < .001$) and paternal authoritarian parenting style ($r = .43, p < .001$). Unexpectedly, grandiose and vulnerable narcissism were each positively correlated with all three parenting styles as well (see Table 1). Thus, we opted to conduct Hotelling's tests to check the relative strength of correlations between each narcissism type and the three parenting styles. Hotelling's tests showed no difference in associations between vulnerable narcissism and each of the three types of parenting styles (all $ps > .05$), contrary to H1b. Interestingly, Hotelling's tests showed that grandiose narcissism had a significantly stronger correlation with permissive parenting than with either authoritarian parenting ($t(185) = 2.31, p = .02$) or authoritative parenting ($t(185) = 3.60, p < .001$), supporting H1a.

Next, we tested whether vulnerable narcissists recall more trauma and negative childhood experiences (H2a) and grandiose narcissists recall more positive childhood experiences (H2b). As expected, vulnerable narcissism correlated positively with trauma ($r = .47, p < .001$) and negative childhood experiences ($r = .56, p < .001$). Unexpectedly, grandiose narcissism also had a positive correlation with childhood trauma ($r = .18, p = .01$). To test the strengths of these correlations comparatively, we conducted a Hotelling's test which showed that the correlation between vulnerable narcissism and childhood trauma was significantly stronger than the

correlation between grandiose narcissism and childhood trauma ($t(193) = 3.86, p < .001$), supporting H2a. Lastly, grandiose narcissism had a weak positive correlation with positive childhood experiences ($r = .17, p = .02$), supporting H2b.

Exploratory Analyses

We explored whether differences exist for paternal vs. maternal parenting styles as recalled by either grandiose or vulnerable narcissists (H3). To test this, we conducted Hotelling's tests to check whether either narcissism type has a stronger association with paternal or maternal parenting for each parenting style. These tests showed that there were no significant differences in strength between maternal and paternal parenting style and subtype of narcissism (all $ps > .05$). In summary, whether the father or mother had a certain parenting style did not predict narcissism type.

Although we did not pre-register hypotheses for the family demographics items, we also conducted exploratory analyses to assess whether various family demographics predict either narcissism type. One-way between-subjects ANOVA tests were conducted to compare the effect of various family demographics on grandiose and vulnerable narcissism development. For significant ANOVA tests, we conducted post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test to measure which responses for each item were linked with grandiose or vulnerable narcissism levels.

There was not a significant effect of the number of siblings on grandiose narcissism ($F(3, 195) = 1.82, p = .15$) nor vulnerable narcissism ($F(3, 195) = 1.63, p = .18$). Whether participants had lived with both biological parents, one biological parent or neither throughout the majority of their childhood also did not significantly affect grandiose narcissism ($F(2, 196) = 2.58, p = .78$) nor vulnerable narcissism ($F(2, 196) = 2.94, p = .55$). An ANOVA test also showed there

was no significant effect of having close extended family members on grandiose narcissism ($F(1, 197) = .01, p = .94$) nor vulnerable narcissism ($F(1, 197) = .17, p = .68$).

However, there was a significant effect of birth order on both grandiose narcissism ($F(3, 195) = 7.31, p < .001$) and vulnerable narcissism ($F(3, 195) = 7.57, p < .001$). Post hoc comparisons indicated that grandiose narcissism levels were higher for middle siblings ($M = 17.37, SD = 9.24$) than either youngest ($M = 11.02, SD = 8.73$) or oldest siblings ($M = 10.24, SD = 8.78$). Similarly, vulnerable narcissism levels were also higher for middle siblings ($M = 34.00, SD = 7.74$) than either youngest ($M = 27.50, SD = 8.41$) or oldest siblings ($M = 30.00, SD = 7.03$).

Additionally, the gender of the participants' parents had a significant effect on grandiose narcissism ($F(5, 192) = 4.47, p = .001$) and vulnerable narcissism ($F(5, 192) = 6.68, p < .001$). Post hoc comparisons revealed that grandiose narcissism levels were higher for participants raised by a single father ($M = 22.92, SD = 3.93$) compared to participants raised by one male parent and one female parent ($M = 12.58, SD = 9.10$) or participants raised by single mothers ($M = 11.75, SD = 10.52$). The effect was similar for vulnerable narcissism, as vulnerable narcissism levels were higher for participants raised by single fathers ($M = 39.54, SD = 7.31$) compared to participants raised by one female and one male parent ($M = 29.74, SD = 7.27$). Importantly, these findings should be interpreted cautiously, as the sample size for participants reporting being raised by a single father ($n = 13$) and those being raised by a single mother ($n = 12$) were both low.

Lastly, an ANOVA test reported that having an absent parent has a significant effect on vulnerable narcissism ($F(1, 197) = 29.41, p < .001$), where vulnerable narcissism levels were higher for participants reporting an absent parent ($M = 34.90, SD = 7.55$) compared to those not

reporting an absent parent ($M = 28.93$, $SD = 7.26$). Having an absent parent had a non-significant effect on grandiose narcissism ($F(1, 197) = 3.84$, $p = .051$), but the model shows a trend towards higher grandiose narcissism with an absent parent, as well.

Pearson's bivariate correlation tests were also run for two items in the family demographics section. There was no significant correlation between having non-family adult visitors to the home and vulnerable narcissism. There was a weak negative correlation between having non-family adult visitors to the home and grandiose narcissism ($r = -.19$, $p = .009$), with fewer non-family adult visitors to the home predicting higher grandiose narcissism levels. Lastly, there were no significant correlations between having friends or peers of the participant to the home and grandiose nor vulnerable narcissism.

Discussion

The online survey of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, experienced parenting styles, and various childhood experiences produced results that both confirm the original hypotheses and inspire questions for future research. These findings endorse that grandiose narcissists do seem to recall permissive parenting (H1a) and vulnerable narcissists tend to recall an authoritarian parenting style (H1b) throughout childhood. In spite of the unexpected additional links between grandiose narcissism, vulnerable narcissism, and other parenting styles, further analyses determined grandiose narcissism to be more strongly related to permissive parenting while vulnerable narcissism was equally related to all three parenting styles. As expected, vulnerable narcissists recalled trauma and negative childhood experiences (H2a). Grandiose narcissists also recalled trauma and negative childhood experiences, in addition to positive childhood experiences (H2b); however, a comparative analysis revealed vulnerable narcissism, rather than grandiose narcissism, to be more strongly associated with the experience of trauma.

Lastly, our findings did not suggest any significant differences in paternal and maternal parenting styles in relation to the experiences of grandiose and vulnerable narcissists (H3).

The relationship between grandiose narcissism and permissive parenting is consistent with previous research. Permissive parents fail to use moments of optimal frustration as learning opportunities by appropriately correcting their children's mistakes (Watson et al., 1992), which shields their child from experiencing failure or adversity. Children who are safeguarded from their own mistakes may believe they are incapable of imperfection and become aggressive when their ego is threatened, as exhibited by grandiose narcissists. In addition, the overvaluation employed in permissive parenting may also influence the development of narcissistic grandiosity as the child internalizes their parent's hyperbolized valuation (Brummelman et al., 2015). Children mirror the excessive validation expressed by their permissive parents and then integrate this overvaluation into their identity (Kohut, 1977).

The relationship between vulnerable narcissism and experiencing authoritarian parenting as a child is also consistent with previous research. As Kohut (1977) describes, a highly critical and controlling authoritarian parent would not provide the self-confirmation needed in identity development. This lack of confirmation may influence the child to develop an excessive need for validation as seen in vulnerable narcissism. This finding also supports the link between experiencing a lack of approval and narcissistic vulnerability found by Nehrig and colleagues (2019). However, vulnerable narcissism was equally linked with authoritative and permissive parenting as well as authoritarian parenting in this research; more research is needed to clarify these associations.

Contrary to our predictions, the results also showed correlations between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and all three parenting styles. This may be due to the Likert scale format

of the Parental Authority Questionnaire. Participants may have been able to recall incidences when their parents exhibited all three parenting styles. Therefore, they may have agreed to some extent with items from all parenting styles. Thus, the results of this measure reflected the participant's experience of all three parenting styles rather than one primary parenting style for each parent. Future research might utilize a forced choice measure where participants choose one parenting style for each parent based on their understanding of all three parenting styles. This may help highlight a direct relationship between each parenting style and each type of narcissism. In addition, this forced choice format would allow future research to explore the various potential combinations of parenting styles and their influences on narcissistic grandiosity or vulnerability. For example, there may be differences in narcissism development in a child with two authoritarian parents compared to a child with one authoritarian parent and one authoritative parent.

Vulnerable narcissists were expected to have experienced childhood trauma and negative childhood experiences. Developing vulnerable narcissism is correlated with experiencing emotional and physical abuse and problematic parenting similar to the findings of Miller and colleagues (2011). The combination of abuse, neglect, and a lack of secure attachment contributes to vulnerable narcissists' maladaptive methods of fulfilling interpersonal needs and a lack of self-esteem regulation.

Beyond confirming the expected relationship between grandiose narcissism and positive childhood experiences, the results unexpectedly reported a relationship between grandiose narcissism and recollections of trauma and negative childhood experiences. This inconsistency may be the result of the retrospective nature of the current study. Perhaps grandiose narcissists unconsciously interpreted the negative experience items more positively than our original

intention in order to protect their fragile yet inflated self-image. For example, a grandiose narcissist may view always spending time alone on the weekends as a child positively because it showcases their young independence. As a further example, grandiose narcissists also reported experiences of comparison to other children by a parent. This could have been misinterpreted as a downward comparison rather than an upward comparison, which was our intention. Recalling downward comparisons would feed a grandiose narcissist's ego. Future research should investigate the effect of narcissism on recall accuracy and explore how narcissists interpret various instances of positive and negative childhood experiences.

In this data set, there was no evidence of differences between maternal and paternal parenting styles and how they influence grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. This lack of gendered influence was also seen in the 2015 study by Brummelman and colleagues. As previously mentioned, future studies using a forced-choice measure of parenting style may reveal the extent of which parental gender and parenting style has on narcissism development. Additionally, future research might be interested in how parent-gender and child-gender relate to parenting styles and narcissism development. For example, researchers could investigate the relationship between vulnerably narcissistic females experiencing an authoritarian mother throughout childhood.

The exploratory analyses of family demographic items offer ideas for future research studies on trait narcissism development. The results highlight birth order, parental unit composition and having an absent parent as having significant effects on narcissism development. Middle children reported higher levels of both grandiose and vulnerable narcissism compared to youngest and oldest born children. Future research may consider how parents alter their parenting styles to cater to each child in the birth order and how birth order influences

personality development, specifically narcissism development. Participants raised by single fathers reported higher levels of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism compared to those raised by one female and one male parent or a single mother, however due to the low number of participants raised by single fathers and single mothers, these findings should be interpreted with caution. Participants with at least one absent parent also reported higher levels of vulnerable narcissism, with levels of grandiose narcissism being just barely not significant. These findings suggest there is a need for more research in populations outside of the nuclear family, including families with single parents and absent parents.

Although the current study expands our understanding of what childhood factors may influence the development of grandiose or vulnerable narcissism, there are some limitations. Using MTurk for a subject pool means that all of our participants self-selected to participate in the survey, were members of MTurk and had access to a computer. Further research should measure these variables in various subject pools, for example across levels of socioeconomic status, to see if the relationships between parenting styles, childhood experiences and narcissism development found in this study are consistent. Additionally, although it was beyond the scope of this study, seeking a higher number of participants initially in future research would eliminate the issue of partially completed data.

As a retrospective study, these results rely on the participants' recall of childhood events. Due to potential recall bias, we cannot rule out the possibility that our findings reflect differences in recollection rather than differences in the original childhood experiences. Moreover, with a lack of research it is uncertain how grandiose and vulnerable narcissism affects recall. A longitudinal study, following participants from childhood through adulthood, would eliminate the issue of recall bias, as both parent and child participants would only report on current levels

of narcissism, parenting styles and experiences. In addition, a potential follow-up longitudinal study might test for specific parental traits or practices rather than set parenting styles to further break down what behaviors of each parenting style predict narcissism development. A longitudinal design might also provide more insight on when narcissism development begins, which may help researchers identify an optimal time for early intervention of narcissism development.

Ultimately, the current research matters because it demonstrates how early childhood experiences of parenting style, positive experiences and trauma may contribute to the development of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. Although these variables are not the sole cause of narcissism development, they offer insight to the origins of grandiose and vulnerable trait narcissism. Narcissists are at high risk for aggressive behavior (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister, 1998), poor social skills (e.g., Campbell & Foster, 2002; Penney & Spector, 2002), depression, anxiety and isolation (e.g., Nehrig et al., 2019). These maladaptive behaviors not only affect the narcissists but also the people they interact with, including romantic partners, friends, family and coworkers (Twenge et al., 2008).

With the knowledge gained from this study, researchers and mental health professionals can build on previous knowledge and improve early intervention and treatment methods for narcissism. These connections between parenting styles, positive childhood experiences and trauma add to the expanding literature on the inciting factors of trait narcissism development. This research supports previous research and highlights the need for additional research in trait narcissism development and the influences of diverse childhood experiences and parenting. Furthermore, this research potentially paves the way for future research in clinical populations to

measure the effect of parenting and childhood experiences in developing Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

In a practical sense, this research suggests a considerable area of interest for mental health professionals treating patients with both trait and pathological narcissism. In order to combat the rising presence of narcissism, parenting classes and parent support groups can use this research and that of future studies to augment early intervention methods. Clinicians may consider working through a narcissist's relationship with their parents in therapy to help them understand their own behaviors. It is vital to address the implications of parenting style, positive and negative childhood experiences, and trauma on the development of grandiose and vulnerable narcissism to alleviate the detriment of narcissism on a personal and societal level.

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